

A Reappraisal Citizen Advisory Committee, would it work?

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How might a citizen advisory committee aid in the reappraisal process? In the SOG publication, "[Creating and Maintaining Effective Local Government Citizen Advisory Committees](#)", Upshaw, 2010", here is the introductory reason to have CACs:

When communities face complex issues affecting large, diverse groups, citizen engagement leads to people being better informed, better able to collaborate with others, and more active in addressing issues that affect them. By sharing responsibility, local officials increase opportunities for citizens to contribute to the common good.

One of the advantages of working at the School of Government is my interaction with colleagues who desire to make government better. I frequently hear or see ideas and concepts used in other areas of local government and think about their application in assessment and appraisal. Last year, I blogged on being [transparent with your audit program](#). In that post, I attempted to introduce the well-received concept of [citizen engagement](#) and [citizens academies](#). Next month, the SOG will offer a workshop, [Working with Citizens Advisory Committees and Boards](#).

Don't sign up just yet.

I learned from the lead faculty for the workshop that most attendees are already using CACs and attend with results and data to discuss. Therefore I hope with this blog we can introduce this idea through questions and discussion. Here are more reasons, listed from [Upshaw](#), to consider engaging your taxpayers through a CAC. I have blended the word "reappraisal" in there some places to show how I believe these are reasons to ask citizens to be an active part of the reappraisal process through a CAC.

1. Tap into the expertise of the citizenry as subject matter experts.
2. Engage citizens as partners in the process of governing the county.
3. Citizens enlarge the room by bringing opinions and perspectives to community issues.
4. Make the reappraisal process more transparent. Citizens become more trusting of local government.
5. CACs extend the reach of local government. Citizens have knowledge of resources,

partners, and strategies outside of local government.

6. Ask elected officials to participate in the CAC. No surprises for elected officials if they interact directly with citizens prior to a reappraisal.
7. CAC members interact in their own networks as members gain knowledge about the reappraisal process.
8. When citizens have a chance to participate in the decision making process, they better understand the trade-offs among competing options and are less likely to appeal or take action when the final decision is not their first preference.

Still, do not sign up for the workshop just yet. Nor should you rush to create a reappraisal CAC. There are other questions to consider.

What are the exact goals and outcomes? What is the exact purpose of the CAC? It is not to appraise property, determine a budget for the assessor's office, or decide whether to postpone a 4-year reappraisal. However, an example of one goal might be to show sales and assessment data throughout the county. Map it, graph it, stratify it. Share where you believe trouble areas may be, how you believe county resources should be focused, and ask for feedback from members.

How will you recruit and select members? There are state mandated CACs, such as the Board of Social Services and [Community College Board of Trustees](#). But we are talking about an optional CAC. I believe the number of members will be based on citizen interest in the upcoming reappraisal. As an elected leader, county manager, or assessor, I would prefer to have influential community representatives who are willing to get involved. Interestingly, these types of community representatives tend to many times be acquaintances of elected leaders, county managers, and assessors. I would want CAC members from different social and geographical areas. I would prefer members to be credible by all parties. But at least we would want the chair to be seen as credible by all parties.

Clearly, there is a lot to discuss and learn. In addition to what we have introduced here, there are other important considerations before jumping in. Possibly the most important being a type of policy document to ensure understanding of scope, duties, responsibilities, organization, meetings, subcommittees, voting, deliverables, compensation (if any), and limitation of powers.

Do you have experience with CACs or other types of citizen engagement with the assessor's office? [IAAO's Standard on Public Relations](#) has only one short mention of CACs as a method of listening to feedback from the public. What questions and concerns do you have about more citizen engagement or the use of CACs in the reappraisal process?

I hope you'll leave a reply and comment below.